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Inside APHIS

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PPQ Pilots Use State-of-the-Art Technology

by Doug Hendrix, Public Affairs, LPA

Satellite navigation. PATHLINK analysis. Sterile-insect technique. Though these terms may sound like they are from a sci-fi thriller, they are really shoptalk for some of the technologies used by Plant Protection and Quarantine's (PPQ) Aircraft and Equipment Operations (AEO) unit in battling exotically introduced pest populations.

State-of-the-Art Technology

AEO's Texas-based aerial cadre is hardly a bunch of neophytes when it comes to the world of high-tech. These professionals continually create and adapt equipment and devices that utilize the latest strategies, treatments, and control measures for combating harmful agricultural agents.

With the implementation of PATHLINK, a state-of-the-art computerized system for vehicular data collection, APHIS' pest-control abilities have advanced to a whole new level.

"The PATHLINK system records, displays, and analyzes an aircraft's flight path," says AEO Supervisory Pilot Tim Roland. "The system provides a permanent record of the event, the time, and an aircraft's position, which is a great asset to our agricultural survey, eradication, and control programs."

By using long range navigation chain (LORAN-C) frequency signals, the PATHLINK system can record a plane's precise position during aerial-release programs. AEO pilots use this information to pinpoint flightpaths over specific geographical areas.

Components of the PATHLINK system include a recorder mounted in the aircraft and a ground-based computer analyzer. The system stores all information obtained during each flight in removable



Plant Protection and Quarantine's Aircraft and Equipment Operations (AEO) unit uses the latest technology to combat harmful agricultural pests. Here, an AEO aircraft instrument panel is equipped with specialized navigation radio equipment to guide the pilot along predetermined flight lines.

memory cassettes, which serve as a record for documentation purposes and provide program personnel with a permanent record of the airplane's flightpath.

Sterile-Insect Technique — A Safe Alternative

Sterile-insect technique (SIT) is one area which has welcomed PATHLINK technology. "Aerial SIT technology is an important weapon in the biological control arsenal used to fight insect pests," says Roland. "The use of PATHLINK supports SIT program efforts to control or eradicate pests with little or no use of chemical insecticides," he says. "The technique does not damage the environment, and humans, animals, plant life, and

non target beneficial insects remain unaffected."

Scientists in the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Research Service developed SIT during the 1930's, but practical application of the technology didn't occur until the 1950's.

APHIS and cooperator facilities can produce large numbers of sterile insects by exposing them to small doses of radiation in rearing facilities. AEO pilots distribute sterilized insects over an infested area using specialized dispersal equipment that is installed in the airplanes. The sterile flies then mate with wild insects of the same species but do not produce any

(See AIRCRAFT on page 4)

Eugene Bifano—Mayor of JFK—Retires

Not everyone can say they have a bongo named after them. Eugene Bifano, a Veterinary Services' (VS) Supervisory Enforcement Officer at John F. Kennedy (JFK) International Airport in New York, is probably one of the few with this distinction. Bifano's namesake, an unusual reddish-brown antelope with a zebra-striped body, was passing through JFK Airport on its way to the Cleveland Zoo when it was christened with Bifano's name.

Though the bongo is the only animal Bifano, or Bif as his family and friends know him, has had named after him, he has inspected countless other animals on their way into and out of JFK Airport.

Bifano, along with other VS officials stationed at ports-of-entry across the country, plays a vital role in ensuring animals imported into and exported out of this country are healthy and free of pests and diseases. When it comes to imported livestock and other animals, Bifano helps veterinarians examine, identify, and load animals plus disinfect the aircraft carrying the animals. As for animals exported from United States, Bifano helps load the animals onto the aircraft and makes sure the shipments have the proper export certification.

Not surprising, Bifano has had many interesting experiences at the Airport while working with animals. Scrambling after livestock to prevent them from running out on the airport runway is just one of his

unforgettable moments. Bifano has also enjoyed dealing with the variety of animals that pass through JFK Airport—everything from livestock and zoo animals to Japanese yearling racehorses worth \$2 to \$3 million each.

Bifano began his agriculture career with meat inspection, where he worked until 1953. At that time, he transferred to what was then the Animal Inspection and Quarantine Division and began working at Idlewild Airport in Jamaica, NY, which is now JFK Airport. He has been at that airport ever since.

After 40 years with APHIS (49 with the U.S. Government) Bifano, who is also affectionately referred to as the "Mayor of JFK," decided to retire at the end of December.

"Bif will be missed at JFK for a very long time," says VS Supervisory Veterinary Medical Officer K. N. Ahmad, who has been Bifano's supervisor for 14 years. "VS at JFK will not be the same without him."

John and Susan Meehan, owners of Fauna and Flora, a Customs House Broker that conducts business via JFK Airport, echo Ahmad's sentiments. "Bif is truly an endangered species as far as Federal employees go," says John Meehan. "He's an institution in himself," offers Charles Merendino, another Customs Broker who works with Bifano. "The livestock shipping industry shall lose its most courageous ally in the care and expedi-



Veterinary Services' Supervisory Enforcement Officer Eugene Bifano retires after 40 years with APHIS at John F. Kennedy International Airport.

tious handling of JFK livestock shipments," says Merendino's partner Joe Santarelli. "Bif will be greatly missed," finishes Meehan.

"When Bif leaves JFK Airport," says Tony Campo, a Regulatory Enforcement and Animal Care Senior Investigator who used to work for Bifano, "it will be more than one person who walks through that door; it will be a father and a friend." ♦

NBCI Employee Performs Heroic Deed

Ever wonder how you would respond to a life-threatening situation? Well, for Robert Flanders, Technical Consultant for the National Biological Control Institute (NBCI), it was automatic.

While eating lunch with coworkers at Prince George's Plaza's cafeteria in Hyattsville, MD, Flanders noticed a gentleman stand up and begin choking. Another patron at the restaurant tried unsuccessfully to apply the Heimlich maneuver to the choking man. Realizing the man needed help, Flanders stepped in and applied the maneuver more forcefully.

After three attempts, Flanders

was able to dislodge the food. "The man gratefully thanked Bob and everyone went about their business," says NBCI Technical Coordinator Michael Oraze, who was lunching with Flanders and witnessed the event. "Within 5 minutes of the incident, the restaurant was back to normal like nothing had even happened."

Though Flanders had never actually performed the Heimlich maneuver before, he was familiar with the technique from first aid films, reading material, and other experiences. "It was automatic," he says. "I didn't think about it; it was just the thing to do." ♦

Inside APHIS

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Work*Family*Life FTS2000 Bulletin Boards Are Operational

On November 15, 1994, the Work*Family*Life (WFL) Program launched two bulletin boards on FTS2000. The first board is informational and provides employees with periodic messages about the WFL Program related to balancing work and family/personal responsibilities. The information board is a "read only" board; employees cannot edit it.

The second bulletin board allows back-and-forth communication and offers employees the opportunity to receive or offer help to other APHIS employees with problems such as balancing work and family/personal situations.

Employees can access the Family bulletin boards by using their FTS2000 identification or the identification of another FTS2000 user. To access the information bulletin board, enter into FTS2000

and type "subscribe !a343Family:Information," "open !a343Family:Information," and "read" and the number of the message you want to read.

To use the communications bulletin board, type "subscribe !a343Family:Family" and "open !a343Family:Family." Then, read the message on the board entitled "Welcome to the Family:Family bulletin board." To read someone else's question, type "read" and the number of the message you want to read. To give a confidential response, type "answer" and the number of the message. To ask for help on a personal or family concern, type "create using 1" and follow the instructions that appear on the screen.

Employees can use the WFL Program's bulletin boards to find information on a variety of topics,

such as help from APHIS coworkers for care available for children or adults when employees need to travel or participate in an emergency assignment for the Agency, advice for parenting issues, and legal advice for the family.

The Family bulletin boards are the result of the cooperative efforts of Animal Damage Control's (ADC) Administrative Officer in the Western Region Diana Rangel, Human Resources Division's Cindy Mowatt, and the WFL Council Chairperson Ray Nosbaum. The bulletin board concept has been pilot tested on WFL Council members and ADC's Western Region.

Contact Ray Nosbaum at (301) 436-6658 for additional information about the WFL Family bulletin boards. ♦

APHIS Sponsors Caregiver's Fair in Hyattsville

As part of National Caregiver's Week, the Work*Family*Life (WFL) Council sponsored a Caregiver's Day in Hyattsville's Federal Building on November 23, 1993. The purpose of the fair was to inform APHIS employees of the services available to them if they have adult caregiving responsibilities. Carol Cohen-Wolfe (left) of Adult Daycare Services and Ann Marie Mwonbela of the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging were available to answer questions on adult daycare services. For more information on other services offered by the WFL Council, see the article above. ♦



PHOTO BY KEVIN CONNER

Aircraft from page 1

offspring. Eventually, the target insect species dies out.

USDA first used SIT to eradicate the screwworm, a fly species that, in its larval stage, causes great damage by feeding on flesh in the wounds of warm-blooded animals. In many tropical and subtropical areas of the Americas, this parasite has prevented livestock industries from fully developing. The United States has also felt the impact of the screwworm. In the 1950's, cattle producers in the southwestern United States lost at least \$100 million dollars each year because of this destructive pest. However, by using SIT, USDA was able to successfully eradicate screwworms from the United States. Today, sterile screwworms are produced at a fly-rearing facility in Tuxtla Gutierrez, Mexico, which is the largest facility of its kind in the world.

Medfly Eradication

PPQ also uses SIT to eradicate outbreaks of the Mediterranean fruit fly (Medfly). In conducting a Medfly eradication program, PPQ officials initially use limited amounts of chemical insecticides, notably ground spraying of Malathion bait around fly-find sites, to reduce the number of wild Medflies. Then, they release sterile Medflies aerially over infested areas and document the activity via the PATHLINK system. PPQ relies on Medfly-rearing facilities in Hawaii, Guatemala, and Mexico to provide flies for eradication programs.

In 1975 APHIS used the combination SIT/insecticide approach for the first time against a small Medfly outbreak in Los Angeles, CA, and has repeated this approach in later outbreaks in both California and Florida. Currently, 300 million sterile Medflies are being released per week in the Los Angeles metropolitan area to rid the area of this crop-destroying pest.

APHIS has also used SIT in efforts to eradicate other U.S. pests, such as the gypsy moth, the pink bollworm, and the Caribbean and Mexican fruit fly. Elsewhere in the world, SIT has helped combat the mosquito, the stable fly, the tobacco hornworm, and the tsetse fly.

USDA's History of Flight



APHIS PHOTO BY DOUG HENDRICK

The planes used by the Aircraft and Equipment Operations unit are specially equipped to disperse sterile insects over infested areas.

Though the AEO unit hasn't been involved in aviation as long as the Wright brothers, it has certainly left its mark in the annals of air-flight history.

Aircraft treatment technology has been an integral part of USDA's plant protection efforts for more than 50 years. USDA aircraft operations began in the 1930's in Greenfield, MA, only to move in the 1940's to Denver, CO, in the early 1950's to Oklahoma City, OK, in 1955 to Beltsville, MD, and finally in 1980 to the AEO unit's current residence in Mission, TX. Currently, the AEO unit employs 21 people and maintains eight planes.

"People are often surprised to learn that we have an air operations

unit," says Roland. "PPQ uses its aircrafts to support the mission of protecting American agriculture

Implications for the Future

In their day-to-day activities, PPQ pilots have specific mission assignments. "Our overriding tenant is to assist research, development, and operational programs in developing better and safer methods for controlling destructive agricultural pests," says Roland. "Our challenge is to support pest control activities in a manner that protects our environment. A full commitment to provide aircraft and equipment services for SIT program initiatives plays a major role in our meeting that challenge." ♦

Honolulu PPQ Officers Seize Mainland-Bound Fruits Galore

On Sunday, September 19, 1993, officer Dwayne Saiki and his staff of Plant Protection and Quarantine aides Marino Augustin, Samuel Bongo, and Ronald Kuniyuki were working the Hawaiian Airlines scan ray machine clearing passengers bound for Los Angeles International Airport. A group of five college students were the last to be inspected. When the students' baggage passed through the scan ray, the monitor indicated all the baggage contained what appeared to be various fruits.

The officers set aside the students' luggage and asked the first passenger if she had any fruits in her bags. She answered no. Officer Saiki repeated the question, this time warning her of a fine if she gave a false declaration. She repeated her negative answer.

Upon opening her baggage, Officer Saiki found bananas, mangoes, chayote, wí, guavas, starfruits, cherimoyas, macadamia nuts with husk, grapefruits, oranges, and two varieties of sweet potatoes. For her false declaration, the passenger was assessed a \$100 fine. At that point, the rest of the group admitted to having fruits in their bags as well.

The confiscated produce, which was all locally grown, is known to host the Oriental fruit fly, Mediterra-



APHIS PHOTO

Plant Protection and Quarantine Officer Dwayne Saiki helped confiscate 135 pounds of prohibited fruit from students traveling through Honolulu Airport to Rosemead, CA, currently a Mediterranean fruit fly Quarantine area.

nean fruit fly, melon fly, black parlatoria scale, mango weevil, sweet potato scarabee, stem borer, and reportable mealybugs. All of these pests could be harmful to U.S. agriculture if introduced.

By the end of the inspection, the Hawaiian scan ray team had confiscated over 135 pounds of

fruits from the students destined for Rosemead, CA, which is currently within the Mediterranean fruit fly Quarantine area. This was the largest single seizure of Mainland-bound fruits in recent memory for the Honolulu Work Unit. ♦

Secretarial Focus

How to Deal With Abusive Telephone Calls

The telephone continues to be one of the most effective means of communication in the workplace today. For that reason, it's paramount that the telephone not become an obstacle that prevents secretaries from efficiently doing their jobs.

All of us, at one time or another, have received an abusive telephone call. Though unfortunate, it's important to remember not to take these calls personally and to remain as professional as possible. Susan Bowen, secretary with International Services, offers some refreshing and noteworthy suggestions regarding how to handle abusive phone calls.

Keep in mind that the person calling usually doesn't mean to take out his/her frustrations on the secretary; the secretary just happens to be the person answering the telephone. As a result, irate customers usually respond best when they are treated with kindness.

Generally, customers will calm down if they feel someone is listening to their concerns and is making an effort to resolve their problems. If you do your best to answer a customer's question or resolve their problem, and they continue to be hostile towards you, try asking them for their name and number and call them back after you have found the

information they are seeking. Handling an abusive caller in this manner will give them time to collect themselves and hopefully calm down.

Another approach for dealing with abusive callers is to politely tell the person that you do not appreciate the way they are treating you and ask them if they can call back when they have composed themselves.

Some offices are different than others, so make sure you discuss with your supervisor the best way to handle abusive callers. ♦

National Biological Control Quarantine Facility Dedication

By Lloyd Wendell, Mission Biological Control Laboratory

On December 2, 1993, Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) dedicated a newly renovated building to house the quarantine component of the Mission Biological Control Laboratory. The existing structure, which originally housed briefing and ready rooms for World War II and Korean conflict pilot trainees, is now a state-of-the-art facility committed to the quarantine of exotic biological control agents introduced from foreign countries.

The new facility's ability to produce a bountiful resource of natural enemies will help APHIS reduce its dependence on chemicals and move forward in the management of insect and weed pests.

The facility's ability to colonize and rear insects will also provide a much needed balance to the National Biological Control Laboratory, which supplies biological control agents to several insect and weed programs throughout the United States and is located adjacent to the quarantine facility.

Current biological control programs include the Colorado Potato Beetle, Sweetpotato Whitefly, Brown Citrus Aphid, Leafy Spurge, and Diffuse and Spotted Knapweed. The Northeastern, Southeastern,



APHIS PHOTO

Plant Protection and Quarantine dedicated a newly renovated building to house the quarantine component of the Mission Biological Control Laboratory.

Central, and Western Regions along with State Departments of Agriculture, universities, and other Federal agencies all cooperate to implement and deliver these programs.

The center of the new facility houses ultra-modern environmental-growth chambers for colonizing and rearing insects; the growth chambers are surrounded by laboratories for receiving, identifying, and evaluating imported organisms.

Five independently air conditioned greenhouses provide the temperature control and quarantine security necessary to screen, colonize, and study phytophagous biological control agents used in the biological control of weeds.

Utilization of this new facility will provide additional quarantine space in the Biological Control Laboratory for importation and containment of insect pathogens and add a new dimension to the existing capabilities in the management of insects and weeds.

Fifty biological control employees and over 250 guests attended the dedication ceremony, which was highlighted by an inspirational address by Texas Congressman Kika De la Garza, Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee.

The Congressman emphasized that even though the average citizen in downtown, Mission, TX, is

(See Laboratory on page 15)



APHIS PHOTO

Congressman Kika De la Garza gave a inspirational address at the quarantine facility's dedication. Here, he speaks to the local press after the event.



APHIS PHOTO

The new quarantine component houses laboratories for receiving, identifying, and evaluating imported organisms.

First Shipment of New Zealand Logs Imported Into California

On November 22, 1993, Eureka, CA, experienced an important first—the first importation of New Zealand logs. Among other things, a decrease in the amount of harvestable timber in the United States has caused various problems for U.S.

lumber companies. In fact, many Western lumber mills no longer have an adequate supply of raw logs to process. As a result, lumber companies are now turning to imported logs from other countries, particularly New Zealand.

The Schmidbauer Lumber Company was the first importer to comply with APHIS' requirements for importing New Zealand logs. The mandatory APHIS requirements for imported New Zealand logs are designed to reduce the pest risk associated with these logs to an insignificant level.

Plant Protection and Quarantine's (PPQ) Assistant Officer in Charge Richard Wion, Supervisory Officer Neil Mendel, and Humboldt County Biologist Dick Spadoni inspected the approximately 4,800 logs and found no exotic pests.

In accordance with PPQ operational guidelines, the logs had been debarked, sprayed with antifungal chemicals, and fumigated in the ship's hold prior to departure from New Zealand. The entire operation was verified by written documentation from the Ministry of Forestry of New Zealand. The logs went directly to the Schmidbauer Sawmill for immediate processing. All lumber was to be kiln-dried and all byproducts burned or made into pulp.

If the resulting products, such as wood mouldings and speciality items, prove profitable, Schmidbauer intends to import a shipload of the New Zealand logs each month. ♦



Aboard the ship, workers prepare slings to offload the approximately 4,800 imported New Zealand logs.

APHIS PHOTO BY RICHARD WION



Plant Protection and Quarantine Inspector Neil Mendel (kneeling) and Humboldt County Inspector Dick Spadoni carefully inspect the New Zealand logs for any exotic pests or diseases.

APHIS PHOTO BY RICHARD WION



Offloading the New Zealand logs from the ship was quite a production.

APHIS PHOTO BY RICHARD WION

Bonnie Buntain: From Africa to Animal Care

By Jamie Ambrost, Executive Correspondence, LPA

Directing the Animal Care (AC) Staff is a task that takes courage and confidence. Bonnie Buntain has both.

She's taken two safaris to Africa, where she slept on the ground of the Serengeti Plain in the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro without fear of the lions and other predatory animals nearby.

In 1990, she moved from the sunny island of Hawaii to the Washington area without the promise of a job because she firmly believed that her skills, experience, and ambition would enable her to find a desired position.

These days, Buntain, the new AC Staff Director, is not thinking about the African highlands or her 6,000-mile move from the tropics. She is focused on the AC program.

"I believe that we need to center the program on prevention and communication," says Buntain. "Making all of the people affected by our regulations aware of the importance of animal welfare and preventing Animal Welfare Act violations from occurring is essential to a successful program."

An Emphasis on Prevention

Before coming to Washington, Buntain had her own veterinary practice in Oahu, HI, from 1980 to 1990. She specialized in equine medicine and surgery and quite literally took her show on the road. In her mobile veterinary hospital, she traveled the island of Oahu treating sick and injured horses.

As she says, "I was on call 24 hours a day treating horses for all sorts of people ranging from the very rich, who had their own stables, to the very poor, who kept their horses in the backyard." At its largest, her veterinary practice totaled about 1,000 horses.

Through her veterinary practice, Buntain developed a preventive philosophy that she carries with her to this day.

"When I first opened my practice, I ran around putting out fires," she says. "I knew that wasn't the way I wanted to run my business. So, I sat down and identified the problem



APHIS PHOTO BY LAURIE SMITH

Bonnie Buntain has been appointed the new Animal Care Staff Director.

areas, set up a strategy, and implemented it."

Her efforts included educating people on how to take care of their animals and a public awareness campaign to make people aware of the importance of animal health. In addition, she worked for a program called Therapeutic Horses for the Handicapped, in which physically challenged children were taught many skills by riding horses. "The kids loved the horses," she emphasizes, "often they would communicate with the animals but never talk to the people."

Somehow, she also found time to be on a radio show and to host a nationally syndicated television program called "Pets and People" that was co-sponsored by the local

Humane Society. The program aired in 47 markets throughout the country, including Maryland and Washington, DC.

As Buntain explains, "the program was done in a fast-paced, magazine format. We focused on topics ranging from surfing dogs to the health needs of Koi, an exotic fish that sells for as much as \$30,000. And, I am proud to say that the show won a few awards and was later emulated by other programs featuring animals," Buntain adds.

So, was her plan for preventing fires successful? "It sure was," she says confidently. "In 5 years, my practice turned around, and my emergency calls went way down. I firmly believe that the best approach

to any business is not to run around putting out fires but to be anticipatory and proactive. Education needs to be at the foundation of all organizations' preventive efforts."

Animal Welfare: A Shared Commitment

Buntain also firmly believes another quality is needed for success: cooperation. "I really believe networking and teamwork are effective in developing proactive solutions to many issues," she says. "I have been on many national animal health and welfare committees and have found that by bringing different interests to the table you often learn valuable new perspectives on an issue."

One of Buntain's ideas for the AC program is the establishment of work teams consisting of headquarters officials and field personnel. "In doing so," she notes, "we should be

able to improve our internal communication on important issues."

She is currently putting this idea into practice with the marine mammal program by establishing a work team consisting of Barb Kohn, the headquarters expert on this subject, and several members of the AC Sector Offices and field staff.

"The team will be able to exchange information and brainstorm on important issues pertaining to marine mammal welfare and proposed changes in welfare standards. This way, both the field and the headquarters officials obtain valuable feedback from each other on this important issue," says Buntain.

"I also believe we need to maintain open lines of communication with the people affected by our regulations and to solicit their advice on different issues," she says. "More importantly," she adds,

"communication and cooperation build good relationships."

Buntain has several other ideas for developing a preventive approach for the AC program, including educating the public and the program's stakeholders about the role of the program in ensuring animal welfare. Before she finishes discussing one idea, she is already thinking of the next. She is continually thinking of ways to make things better in the future.

When asked if she misses Hawaii, she leans forward in her chair and says smiling, "No, I really don't. The challenges in the Federal Government are so exciting that it's like starting over and learning a new life." "And," she adds, pointing to the mural of the Serengeti that hangs on her office wall, "this time, I'm closer to Africa." ♦

EIS Completed for Medfly Cooperative Program

After about 2 years of intensive work, Biotechnology, Biologics, and Environmental Protection's Environmental Analysis and Documentation staff, which provides guidance to the Agency on environmental matters and prepares environmental documents, has completed the final environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Medfly Cooperative Eradication Program.

The document—released to the public on November 26, 1993—analyzes the environmental impact of the Mediterranean fruit fly (Medfly) control alternatives in nine States; it is the first EIS to be produced by APHIS in-house.

The Environmental Analysis and Documentation staff prepared the EIS for the Plant Protection and Quarantine program, which will use the EIS as a resource for future Medfly programs.

About 1,100 copies of the docu-

ment have been distributed to program officials and the public. A decision relative to the program is expected around December 27, 1993.

"We knew from experience and from scoping that Medfly control projects tend to be controversial and that there would be great interest in the document," says EIS project manager Harold Smith. "So, we were challenged to prepare an analysis that not only met procedural requirements but was also highly effective in estimating and communicating risk. The Medfly EIS represents the integration of procedure, policy, and science."

"The document's appearance or manner of presentation contributes to the usefulness and credibility of the document," says Vicki Wickelser, the project's principal writer/editor. "The risk assessments were the heart of the docu-

ment, but we believed that the EIS had to have an overall professional and polished appearance."

To condense complex information contained in the EIS and facilitate an understanding of the document, the EIS includes photographs, tables, and graphics.

Though the Medfly EIS does not reprint technical analyses or reports, it does incorporate such items by reference.

"The programmatic nature of the Medfly EIS complicated the preparation of the risk assessments," says Jack Edmundson, who managed the development of the documents referenced in the EIS. "In using references, we pioneered a new approach for the Biological Assessment that will save APHIS considerable time and money in the future." ♦

Making A Difference: The Partnership in Education Program

By Tangela Smith, Executive Correspondence, LPA

"You read the newspapers every day, and you read about young kids killing each other, young girls getting pregnant," says Policy and Program Development's (PPD) Janis Pressley, "and I felt I wanted to be a part of the solution and not a part of the problem. The program gives us the opportunity to do that. I'm glad APHIS is doing this; it says a lot about our Agency."

To what is she referring? None other than APHIS' Partnership in Education program, which affords APHIS employees the opportunity to use up to 2 hours of administrative leave per week to serve as mentors or tutors to students at participating schools. A pilot program was initiated by PPD in Hyattsville, MD, during the 1992-1993 school year with Northwestern Senior High School and Hyattsville Middle School participating in the headquarters area.

According to Recruitment and Development's (R&D) Mary Ellen Keyes, who is also the Partnership in Education coordinator, the program was ready to expand. "After the pilot was completed and evaluated by R&D, we were convinced it was a good program and we wanted to expand it APHIS-wide—not just with PPD and headquarters but also out in the field."

This year, Hyattsville Elementary School was added to the list of participating schools, and APHIS employees in the Washington area are welcome to work with students at Van Ness Elementary School, USDA's official adopted school.

Goals and Other Benefits

The objectives of APHIS' educational partnership include not only improving the quality and effectiveness of public education but increasing the students' awareness of the significant impact that agriculture has on the everyday life of each citizen. "This is long-term investment," says Keyes, "because you don't know who will be a future APHIS employee."

APHIS' Partnership in Education program has turned out to be much more than anyone had anticipated. Many of the students selected by the schools to participate are confronting serious, adult issues. "They pick kids who are having problems and need some type of



APHIS PHOTO BY LAURIE SMITH

Policy and Program Development's Toni Ross (left) is one of 53 APHIS employees participating in the Partnership in Education program.

role model," says Pressley. "A lot of the children come from single-parent homes, and the parent is not really there. The children benefit from undivided attention; it's not judgmental or dictating; it's just one adult giving them attention that's all theirs."

Though the 53 APHIS employees participating in the program have elected to serve either in the capacity of mentor or tutor, they often find that their roles are not clearly defined. "There's a fine line between mentoring and tutoring," says Keyes. "Though the children are trying to develop skills, their personal problems are getting in the way. So, you have to clear that up before you can get anything done."

The consensus among mentors seems to be that once the kids feel good about themselves, academic successes will come.

Has the program proven effective? Well, by all standards, effective would be an understatement. According to Elsie Jacobs, a counselor at Hyattsville Middle School, the program has really impacted the lives of many of her students. When asked whether she had noticed any improvements in her students, she exclaimed, "Oh my gosh, Yes! Grade point average, self control, manners. The program has been a great success. A lot of them, that's all they have. It gives the kids something to look forward to."

The Partnership in Education program's advantages are in no way limited to the students; APHIS employees recognize that they too enjoy the program's benefits. Several APHIS participants express that they often feel more productive when they return to work after a session with a student. "I feel good about myself when I can get a response," says King Lovinger, a tutor at Northwestern Senior High School.

Outlook for the Future

By most accounts, APHIS expects that the program will continue well into the future. But, Keyes says that she wants as many new mentors and tutors as possible. "The need is critical out there. If everybody mentored or tutored 1 hour a week, do you realize what kind of impact we could have on these future leaders, future employees? The more we can do to help them, the better off we all are," she says. There are over 250 students waiting for mentors at the Hyattsville Middle School alone.

Keyes is interested in developing mentoring programs in the field as well and encourages employees to start a partnership with the community school in their area.

For more information about headquarters' Partnership in Education program contact Keyes at (301) 436-4949. ♦

What to Know About Leave Without Pay Procedures

By Adele Dixon, Human Resources Operations

Leave without pay (LWOP), also referred to as non-pay status, is leave that is requested by an employee and approved in advance by an appropriate official.

Some employees request LWOP for illness or other absences when leave balances are exhausted. Other employees request LWOP when they are waiting for approval of a disability retirement application and have no sick leave. Then, there are employees who are injured at work and are absent past the 45-day continuation-of-pay. These individuals are placed on LWOP while they are paid by the Office of Workers' Compensation.

Employees may request up to 30 days of LWOP by submitting a verbal or written request to their supervisor. The request should indicate the expected duration of the absence and the reason for the request.

When LWOP is requested for medical reasons or because of a work-related injury, employees must submit a physician's certificate. Requests for LWOP in excess of 30 days must be made in writing and approved by the appropriate official in accordance with agency leave directives (APHIS Directive 402.6, dated October 7, 1982, or Agricultural Marketing Service Instruction 305-2).

A copy of the approved written request should be submitted to Human Resources Operations (HRO)

along with the LWOP SF-52, Request for Personnel Action. To expedite paperwork and ensure prompt salary benefits upon returning to work, employees may also want to send a Return to Duty SF-52 to be held in HRO until the effective date.

LWOP of less than 80 hours is processed by using the appropriate code on employees' time and attendance (T&A) reports. LWOP for more than 80 hours must be documented by submitting an SF-52.

Because of the importance of differentiating between time lost as a result of work-related illness and other absences, submitting offices should be sure to include a description of the reason for LWOP in the Remarks Section of the SF-52.

LWOP can also have a significant impact on employee benefits. For example, employees with health benefits coverage are still responsible for paying their premiums while on LWOP. Furthermore, employees receiving LWOP in excess of a year can have their life and health insurance benefits terminated.

Life insurance for employees in a non-pay status remains in effect for 365 days at no cost to the employee. However, after the 365 days, the employees' life insurance is terminated. Life insurance coverage will recommence for employees with the same options as before when they return to duty.

Employees under the Federal Employees Retirement System who are receiving LWOP do not receive Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) matching funds from the agency nor are they able to make contributions to TSP. Employees receiving LWOP do not accrue sick and annual leave either. In addition, using LWOP in excess of 6 months in a calendar year will affect employees' service credit for leave, reductions-in-force, and retirement.

For General Schedule employees, LWOP in excess of 80 hours will delay their within-grade increase. And for the Wage Grade employees, an excess of 40 hours of LWOP will delay their within-grade increase. Employees' probationary and career tenure waiting periods are also affected by LWOP status.

If employees are absent due to military duty or compensable injury, there is no penalty for the non-pay status. In that case, all time is credited for within-grade increases and employees' length of service continues just as though the employees had remained in pay and duty status.

Supervisors should periodically review leave regulations with their employees and consult the appropriate directive if questions arise. Contact your HRO Staffing Specialist for complete information on how non-pay time affects employee benefits. ♦

First North American Air Cargo Conference and Exposition

The Greater Houston Partnership, the Northwest Houston Chamber of Commerce, and the City of Houston's Aviation Department hosted the first annual North American Air Cargo Conference from September 23-24 in Houston, TX.

Carl Hatchett, Houston's Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Officer in Charge, spoke at the conference explaining the Department of Agriculture's role and concerns about the export and import of animal and plant products. He expressed that with

today's technology and knowledge of PPQ's regulations, cargo will be expedited and cleared that much quicker.

Alma Mercado, Assistant Officer in Charge of Houston International Airport, assisted at the conference by answering specific questions pertaining to international air cargo. PPQ officers John Deveraux and Nancy Becker hosted the PPQ booth, which had a diversified display of both restricted and prohibited items that have been intercepted out of cargo and bag-

gage. Most conference participants were both amazed and eager to learn about the confiscated items and why they were a threat to American agriculture.

The conference turned out to be a great success and Houston plans to hold future annual affairs to promote trade between North American countries in which PPQ will play a major role. PPQ was privileged to participate in this conference and to be able to spread knowledge of APHIS' mission to protect American agriculture. ♦

An Eggcellent Comment

"We've received comments at public hearings, by mail, and by fax before," says Regulatory Analysis and Development (RAD) Assistant Chief Cindy Howard, "but this is the first time we've received a comment like this."

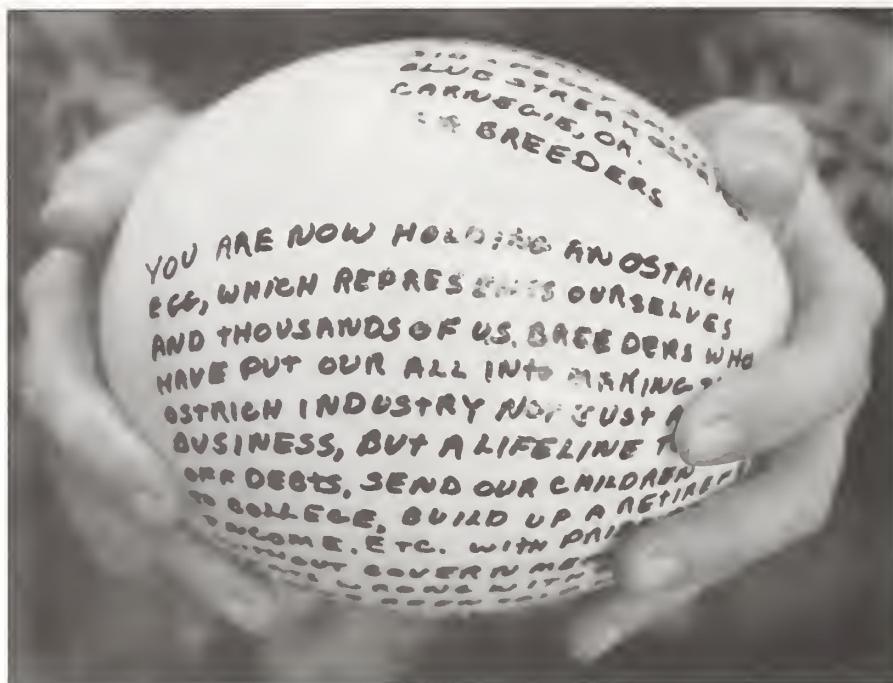
The comment, hand-printed directly onto an ostrich egg, was delivered to the VS Deputy Administrator's office in response to a recent APHIS proposed rule that was published in the Federal Register.

"APHIS is proposing to change some regulations related to quarantine facilities," says Howard, "and the ostrich breeders who wrote this comment are worried that changes to APHIS' current regulations could prompt an influx of imported ostrich chicks and eggs, which could affect their business."

In recent years, raising and breeding ostriches has become a popular business. These birds are in demand for their feathers, leather, and meat, which is similar in taste to beef but contains very little cholesterol. These days, a healthy ostrich chick will sell for anywhere between \$2,500 to \$3,000.

However, with the growing ostrich industry comes some problems. Currently, APHIS allows only chicks under 3 feet tall and weighing 30 pounds or less and ostrich hatching eggs to be imported into this country because of the threat of ticks and diseases foreign to the United States.

Even then, chicks must undergo quarantine at APHIS' quarantine



APHIS PHOTO BY LAURIE SMITH

Regulatory Analysis and Development received a truly unusual comment in response to a proposed rule that was published in the Federal Register.

facility in Newburgh, NY, or Miami, FL, and hatching eggs must be quarantined at private USDA-approved quarantine facilities.

When commenting on a proposed rule, people are supposed to submit several copies of their comment. These breeders did that; they sent RAD a second egg for our public reading room; both of the eggs had been drained and dried.

Generally, the comment process on a proposed rule goes as follows: a proposed rule is published in the Federal Register; the public has 30-60 days to submit two copies of their written comments on the proposed rule; RAD keeps a copy of

the comments received and forwards copies to the regulation's writer, the program contact, and the reading room; all comments received are carefully considered; the proposed rule is revised if necessary; and a final rule is published in the Federal Register.

"Because the egg would have been hard to file in our records we had it transcribed," says Howard. "Judy Lee, who manages the Public Comment Reading Room in room 1141 in the South Building in Washington, DC, found a more creative way to file her copy of the egg. She keeps it in its own nest in the files." ♦

Guam ADC Specialist Makes An Expensive Discovery

By Stuart McDonald, Public Affairs, LPA

On December 2, 1993, Animal Damage Control Specialist Tom Hall, who is in Guam for the brown tree snake problem there, was outside his office on Ritidian Point. He was noticing a bird fly overhead when he was distracted by a truck on the beach below. A bird in flight is a rare sight on Guam since the brown tree snake has destroyed the bird population.

Since the whole area is restricted, Hall and Fish and Wildlife Service official John Sanchez went down to investigate. The intruders turned out to be beachcombers who voluntarily turned over a packet they had retrieved.

The beachcombers were escorted off the property and the packet was turned over to Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement and the Guam police. The packet contained two kilos of

pure cocaine worth an estimated \$500,000.

Since the December 2nd discovery, there have been other recoveries along the beach. Speculation is that a shipment was jettisoned at sea and is just now washing up on the Guam shore. However, due to the sharp eye and quick action of Hall and Sanchez at least two kilos of cocaine won't find its way onto the street. ♦

Beagle Brigade Inducted Into Pedigree Hall of Fame

By Anna Cherry, Public Affairs, LPA

This fall, a member of the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) staff was inducted into a St. Louis museum's Hall of Fame—the National Dog Museum's Pedigree All-Star Hall of Fame, that is. On behalf of PPQ's Beagle Brigade, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Marketing and Inspection Services Patricia Jensen accepted a citation from the National Dog Museum in St. Louis, MO.

This is the second year for the Pedigree All-Star Hall of Fame, which has service, media, obedience, and other categories of recognition. The Beagle Brigade joins such canine stars as Toto and Lassie on the museum's inductees list.

Betty White-Ludden, perhaps best known for her role in television's the "Golden Girls," presented the award to Jensen. In her presentation, White stated that the Beagle Brigade is part of the Nation's first line of defense against foreign animal and plant pests and diseases. Upon receiving the citation, Jensen thanked the Dog Museum for recognizing the important service the Beagle Brigade provides.

Jim Smith, PPQ Operations Officer and National Coordinator of the Beagle Brigade program, and Northeast Coordinator Hal Fingerman attended the induction ceremony along with beagles Bruce and Leader.

"It is a great honor for the Beagle Brigade to be recognized as an important service program," says Smith. "All Beagle Brigade teams should share in this award."

PPQ has Beagle Brigade teams at 18 international airports across the country that are trained to sniff out food, fruits, meats, and plants in traveler's baggage. These dogs' ability to detect prohibited agricultural products has been a great asset in protecting American agriculture from foreign plant and animal pests and diseases.♦



APHIS PHOTO BY HAL FINGERMAN

Beagle Brigade's Bruce poses at the Pedigree All-Star Hall of Fame awards ceremony with the award and a basket of treats he won in a raffle.



APHIS PHOTO BY HAL FINGERMAN

National Beagle Brigade Program Coordinator Jim Smith and Betty White-Ludden congratulate Bruce.

APHIS 1994 Calendar of Events

January

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 5th | Technical Review Board Meeting (M&B) |
| 8th—17th | Smith Kilbourne FAD Seminar (VS) |
| 10th | Aircraft Program Review Task Force (M&B) |
| 10th—14th | Western State Directors' Meeting (ADC) |
| 11th—14th | OPM Symposium Employee and Labor Relations (M&B) |
| 15th | USDA/1890 National Scholars Program Announcement Closes |
| 17th | *Martin Luther King's Birthday |
| 18th | LEAD Program Announcement Closes (R&D) |
| 20th | Self Esteem Building Workshop (WIN) |
| 24th | Operation Jumpstart Class Begins |
| 24th—28th | Annual Employee and Labor Relations Conference (M&B) |
| 24th—28th | Eastern State Directors' Meeting (ADC) |

March

Women's History Month

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 3rd—4th | Food Safety Forum |
| 11th | Women's Executive Leadership Program Announcement Closes |
| 15th—18th | 12th Conference of the Office International des Epizooties Regional Commission for the Americas (IS) |
| 16th—18th | Public Responsibility in Medicine and Research National Conference (REAC) |
| 21st—24 | FOSSE 1994 Conference (M&B) |
| 21st—25th | Program Managers' Training (M&B) |
| 22nd—25th | Administrative Systems for Program Managers (FSO) |
| 24th | California Lab Animal Medicine Society Meeting (REAC) |

February

African American History Month

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 2nd | Technical Review Board Meeting (M&B) |
| 6th—11th | Safety and Health Council Meeting (M&B) |
| 6th—11th | Pest Risk Assessment (PPQ/Brownsville Office) |
| 9th | Security Officers' Council Meeting (M&B) |
| 15th | Summer Intern Announcement Closes |
| 15th | Dealing with Gender Discrimination Workshop (WIN) |
| 21st | *Presidents' Day |
| 28th—March 1st | U.S. AHA Governmental Relations Committee Meeting (VS) |

April

| | |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| 2nd | APHIS' Birthday |
| 10th—15th | Quadrilateral Meeting (IS) |
| 13th | Financial Planning Workshop (WIN) |

May

Asian/Pacific Heritage Month

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 12th—13th | Scientists Center for Animal Welfare Conference on Research Animal Anesthesia, Analgesia, and Surgery (REAC) |
| 16th—20th | 62nd General Session for Office International des Epizooties (IS) |
| 16th—20th | Annual Safety and Health Conference (M&B) |
| 30th | *Memorial Day |

*Government Holiday

- Inside APHIS intends to run a Calendar of Events section as a regular feature. Contact us at (301) 436-5270 to include upcoming events in future issues. Because of limited space, we cannot guarantee all events submitted will be included.

Retirements

This list includes the names of APHIS employees who retired between July 15, 1993, and December 15, 1993.

Animal Damage Control

Kenneth McDaniel, Mc Neal, AZ
Henry Moore, Cedarville, CA
Joe Packham, Pocatello, ID
Don Moon, Parker, AZ
Robert Starr, Lakewood, CO

Biotechnology, Biologics, and Environmental Protection

John Allen, Gulfport, MS
Fredna Cospelich, Gulfport, MS

Veterinary Services

John Barkley, Jefferson City, MO
Roger Bean, Whately, MA
Harvey Butler, Hope Hull, AL
George Clawson, Lake City, TN
Joyce Davis, Baton Rouge, LA
Jas Devan, Inglewood, CA
Daniel Diaz, Guma Caguas, PR
Nora Kitchen, Ames, IA
William Nape, Pickerington, OH
James Maxwell, Helena, MT
Derico Perez, Rio Grande City, TX
Van Robinson III, Douglas, AZ
Doloris Swanson, Ames, IA
John Wagner, Glassboro, NJ
Robert Whiting, Hyattsville, MD

Regulatory Enforcement and Animal Care

Lowell Wood, Tuscaloosa, AL

Policy and Program Development

Robert O'Brien, Hyattsville, MD

Laboratory from page 6

unaware of the facility's contribution to U.S. agriculture, people throughout the world are very aware of its global contribution to providing food and fiber. Special recognition was given to PPQ Associate Deputy Administrator Richard Backus for his continued support of the biological control program from its

infancy in the agency.

A plaque was also presented to the biological control laboratory employees in honor of their commitment to agriculture and the management of agronomic pests.

The biological control complex is located just 30 miles from the large Agricultural Research Service,

Plant Protection and Quarantine

Richard Akins, Winter Haven, FL
Robert Barr, Houston, TX
Antonio Cabarga, Phoenix, AZ
Robert Cooper, Miami, FL
Stanley Guenther, Astoria, OR
Paul Hernandez, Miami, FL
Alden Paterson, Portland, OR
Jack Savage, Charlotte, NC
Shelton Thompson, Mullins, SC
Robert Wakamiya, Honolulu, HI

Management and Budget

John Caleavy, Hyattsville, MD
Jane Simone, Hyattsville, MD

Deaths

This list includes the names of APHIS employees who died between July 15, 1993, and December 15, 1993.

Plant Protection and Quarantine

Milton Johnson, Lumberton, NC
Sara Slaughter, Jacksonville, FL

Veterinary Services

Edward Bassinov, Gainesville, FL
Robert Marshall, Del Rio, TX

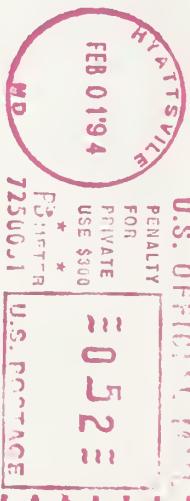
Management and Budget

William Havens, Hyattsville, MD

Subtropical Agricultural Research Laboratory, and Texas A&M Agriculture Experiment Station in Weslaco, TX. Cooperative work by the three interagency facilities comprises one of the largest centers of excellence devoted to biological control in the United States. ♦

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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